

The purpose of this hearing was for the Board to consider harvest management for the Bluenose East Caribou, and a request by ENR to impose harvest limits on Sahtu Dene/Metis Participants.

The Board has this power under the Land Claim:

13.5.2 The Board may, in accordance with this chapter, establish, modify or remove total allowable harvest levels from time to time in the settlement area but shall establish or modify such levels only if required for conservation and to the extent necessary to achieve conservation.

13.5.4 The Board may establish the total allowable harvest and a Sahtu Needs Level for a particular wildlife species or population applicable to the settlement area as a whole, or to particular areas or communities. The Board may adjust such Sahtu Needs Level from time to time.

However, not one Dene or Metis person in this hearing spoke in favour of establishing a Total Allowable Harvest or a Sahtu Basic Needs Level.

Such quotas are foreign to us. This does not fit into our worldview. It feels like an imposition. Such methods are harsh.

They remind me of residential schools. It's like we are being told that our ways of life and the teachings that have sustained us and the caribou for tens of thousands of years through times of plenty and through times of hardship aren't good ways.

We are told to become modern, to become "educated" about conservation, and to follow your rules.

We do not believe that the ENR's proposals to use quotas to limit harvesting by Dene and Metis people at this time can be justified. There is both scientific uncertainty about what is happening on the land and to the caribou, and scientific uncertainty about whether or not a caribou quota would make any difference.

We do not believe that the ENR's proposals to use quotas to limit harvesting by Dene and Metis people can be justified on the basis of traditional knowledge.

We don't want to have what happened to us in 2007 to happen again. Our knowledge was taken from us and used against us. Our estimates of caribou in our area was taken out of context and used to justify a harvesting limit that we still don't recognize as legitimate.

We also appreciate the difficult position the Board is in.

We are here because we know that everything depends on everything else. That is the basis of everything we are taught. If you take us out of the picture, it will have impacts. The people and the caribou are in a relationship. We need to sustain that relationship. That is what the Board is here for – to help us sustain that relationship.

The Board is being asked to look into the future and to find the right path. You are hearing different things from different sides. We came here to remind the Board that it does not have to do this alone.

The Land Claim contains other tools than harvesting quotas. Section 13.8.23(c) states that the Board has the power to approve plans for the management and protection of particular wildlife populations like the Bluenose Caribou. We want the Board to work with all of us to develop those plans.

We are here because we respect everyone and we need to work together. We want to work with the Board, the ENR and with all of the communities, hunters, elders and other users to find the right way forward, and we are prepared to do that.

We want the Board to make decisions that will allow us all to move forward in a good way, and make the following specific recommendations:

1. That the Board decide that the establishment of a harvest quota is not required for conservation, because there are other, more effective and culturally appropriate measures that can be achieved under a caribou plan.
2. That the Board direct the SRRB staff and the ENR to work with all of the Sahtu communities to bring forward a caribou plan for the region that is supported by all of the communities.
3. That the Board acknowledge and make recommendations to remedy the significant gaps in capacity and support to the RRCs;
4. That the Board and ENR take immediate steps to directly involve Renewable Resources Councils and participant harvesters in research and harvesting studies to the greatest extent possible in accordance with 13.8.40 of the Land Claim.